

We yet have time, you see, to philosophize like two Greeks. . . .

I take, as you do, unceasing, and perhaps even more interest than I acknowledge to myself, in Lamoricière, whom I am inclined to think somewhat indifferent to every one of us, and only, and passionately, attached to his profession. He carries me away in spite of myself; and when I read the assault of Constantine, I fancied that I saw him standing alone on the top of the breach, and or an instant my whole soul was with him. I love him, o, for the sake of France: for I cannot help thinking that a great general is contained in that little man.

Baugy, March 21, 1838.

I have just received a letter from you; but first I must answer the one that I carried away with me the other day.

Your letter is interesting, and on the whole I think that you are right. You would entirely satisfy me, if I were merely a reasonable being; but I have within me powerful instincts, which your words cannot pacify. I own that it is unreasonable to long for a better fate than that of man. But such is my involuntary and irresistible impulse. There are some views of humanity so mean, that I feel contempt for the whole affair creeping over me in spite of myself. This impression would be unfortunate, if it were frequent, and, if it became permanent, would paralyze instead of stimulating my exertions. I should have too much to say on this subject, so as time passes, I turn to your second letter.

I reply to the first part of it by telling you, that during the last few days I have been reading the life of Mahomet and the Koran. The Koran is the most annoying and

the most instructive of books; for, on looking closely, one sees all the threads by which the prophet held, and still holds, his votaries. It is a complete compendium of the art of prophecy, and I strongly advise you to read it. I cannot imagine, how ——— could say, that that book was an advance upon the gospel. In my opinion there is no comparison between them, and I think that reading it is enough to explain the difference between Mussulmans and Christians. The Koran seems to me to be no more than a clever compromise between materialism and spiritualism. Mahomet has opened the door to the coarsest passions of our nature, in order to introduce with them certain highly refined notions; so that, one set balancing the other, human nature may hang tolerably suspended between heaven and earth.

This is the philosophical and disinterested part of the Koran; as for the selfish part it is still more evident. The doctrine that “faith saves;” that “the first of religious duties is to believe blindly in the prophet;” that “the sacred war is the best of God’s works;” and many other doctrines, of which the practical result is easily seen, are found in every page, and almost in every sentence in the Koran.

The violent and sensual tendencies of the Koran are so striking, that I cannot conceive their escaping the observation of a reasonable man. It is an advance on polytheism, inasmuch as it contains clearer and truer ideas of the Divine Being, and a more intelligible and wider analysis of certain duties common to man. But the passions which it excites have made it more mischievous to mankind than polytheism, which, having no unity in doctrine or priesthood, never had much hold over men, and left them considerable freedom of action; whilst Mahom-

etanism has exercised over the human race an immense, and on the whole a far from salutary influence. I should like to say more about Mahometanism in particular, and religion in general. But of late my head soon tires, and forces me to think as little as possible on serious and engrossing topics. I stop, therefore, though with regret. It makes me sad, to think of the long period of separation still before us: nearly two months. I feel the wish and almost the necessity of conversing with you. I cannot understand why it should be impossible for you to spend Easter-week with us. Neither society nor business engages people in our world at that period. Besides the extreme pleasure it would give us to have you to enliven our solitude, we should have more leisure than we have ever enjoyed to clear up some ideas of practical importance, which discussion only can render less obscure. Come then, I pray.

Tocqueville, August 8, 1838.

I wish you to hear once more from me before you return, and I direct to Rennes as the safest place. . . . I pass immediately, and, as we often do, without transition from you to your antipodes, that is to Plato. Your view of him seems to me to be admirable, because it exactly coincides with my own. The epithet "puerile," which you apply to the bearded old philosopher, especially pleased me; I smiled at it approvingly, for it is precisely the appropriate adjective. There is, indeed, something childish in the ideas, and still more in the arrangement, sometimes methodical, and sometimes irregular peculiar to Plato. But on several occasions he is more than man, especially if one considers the time when he lived. On the whole, I consider him a poor politician; but as a philosopher superior to any, and I admire his attempts to

introduce, as much as is possible, morality into politics. There is a high and spiritual aspiration about that man which excites and elevates me. I think that it is to this more than to anything else that he owes his glorious immortality. For, after all, men in every age like to hear about their souls, though they seem to care only for their bodies. Adieu; I go back to work. We are looking forward to seeing you again.

Nacquerville, October 9, 1838.

I have lately been leading such an exciting and wandering life, dear friend, that I have not been able to answer your last letter. Yet I was much moved by it. Its expressions of attachment to me are very touching. Pray forgive me for having told you of my fears and doubts; my only excuse is the great value that I set upon our intimacy. Although I differ from you on several important points, still there is no mind to which I am so bound, or with which I have such real sympathy, as yours. Only with you can I give full vent to my highest instincts, which I am forced to control or to suppress in my habitual intercourse with men. With you I yield freely to every impulse of my head and of my heart. With you I can sift every idea and every feeling without fear of hurting either you or myself. With no one else is this the case, and the effect is delightful. It is the greatest and most manly enjoyment that I know. Nothing could pain me more than its loss. . . .

I must say that I approve and understand the urgent endeavors of your family to prevent your visit to Africa at the present moment. Such a journey would not be well-timed. But if you are not in Africa, why do you not write? You know how impatiently Marie and I long for news of you. . . .